# The Michigan PASSENGER

YOUR SOURCE FOR PASSENGER RAIL NEWS • SINCE 1973

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# Passenger Service to Traverse City Takes a Step Forward

The possibility of rail passenger service to northern Michigan took a big step forward this summer when grants for freight track upgrades and passenger rail studies were announced. In July, Michigan lawmakers, led by State Senator Wayne Schmidt (R-Traverse City) budgeted $1 million to kick-off a federally required planning process. Then in August, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg announced that the U.S. Department of Transportation would support the planning study effort by providing the remaining $1.3 million through a RAISE grant.

James Bruckbauer, Transportation Director at the Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities in Traverse City, summarized several recent developments since the initial passenger feasibility study was completed in 2018:

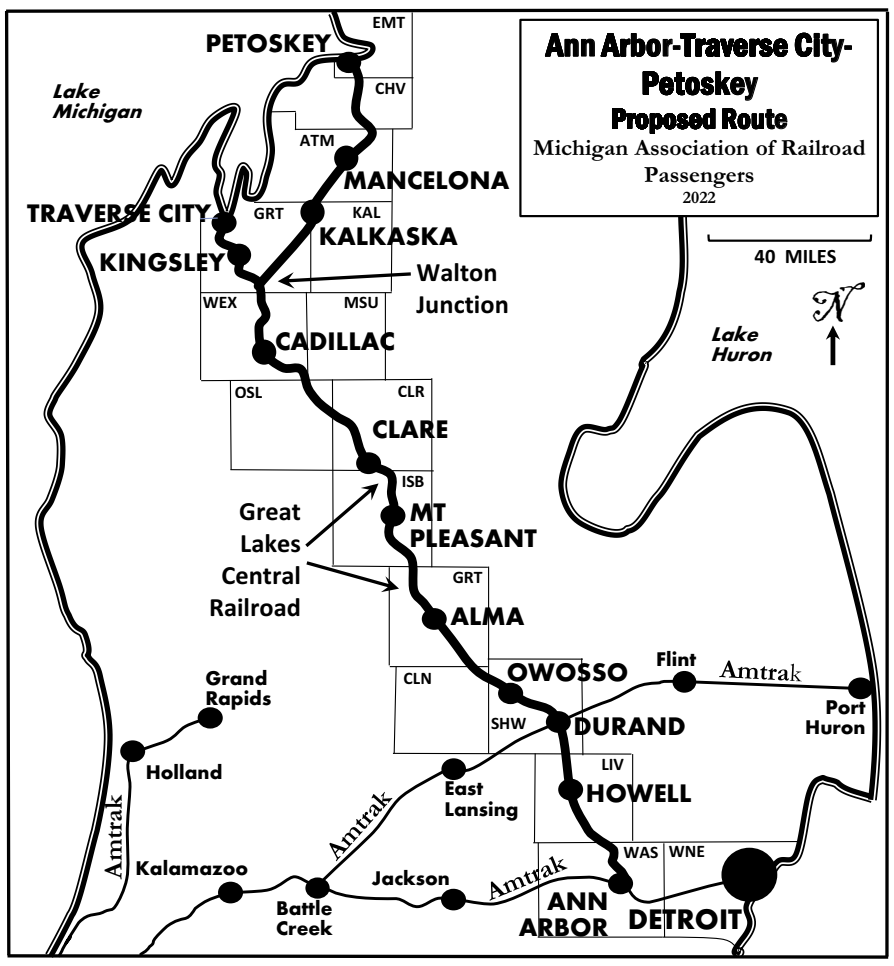
- In 2019 and 2020, state lawmakers, led by Senator Schmidt, included $2.5 million in funding in Michigan's transportation budget to improve tracks in Traverse City for freight and future passenger service.
- Earlier this year, MDOT was awarded a $21 million federal rail grant to improve tracks along the Ann Arbor to Traverse City rail line owned by MDOT and operated by the Great Lakes Central Railroad.
- In July, state lawmakers, led by Senator Schmidt, not only provided $1 million to launch the planning process, but are now working to bring up to $150 million in additional funding for track repairs that will benefit both freight and passenger service.

Receipt of the USDOT RAISE grant of $1.3 million in support of the planning study was particularly satisfying. The RAISE (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity) award will go to the Cadillac/Wexford Transit Authority who will work with the Groundwork Center to get the study completed.

Bruckbauer was particularly excited about the bipartisan support for this idea and the fact that there are local, state and federal champions on both sides of the aisle, including Senator Schmidt, a Republican, and Michigan Senator Gary Peters, a Democrat, at the federal level.

The project has had wide public support. Supporters who have provided strong encouragement and financial support over several years to get this effort off the ground have included:

- C.S. Mott Foundation
- Les and Anne Biederman Foundation
- Rotary Charities of Traverse City
- Aspire North REALTORS
- National Association of REALTORS
- USDA
- Esperance Foundation,
- MDOT
- Traverse City Tourism
- Petoskey Area Visitors Bureau
- Petoskey Downtown Management Board
- Washtenaw County
- City of Alma
- City of Traverse City
- City of Mt. Pleasant
- Bay Area Transportation Authority
- And many generous individual donors



**Grand Traverse Dinner Train at Traverse City on October 1, 1997. (Roy Davey photo)**

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The Michigan Passenger welcomes your comments and submissions on passenger rail issues. Comments, articles, and other materials sent for publication should be sent by email to jhguidinger1@yahoo.com. Clippings from newspapers, magazines, and electronic sources must include the publication's name and date. Photos sent by email must be in .jpg format. We reserve the right to edit all submissions.

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## About MARP

The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc. (MARP) was established in 1973 as a customer advocacy group to improve intercity passenger rail and bus service, commuter rail service, and transit, and to encourage the preservation of historic railroad stations.

MARP is not affiliated with Amtrak, the railroads, governments, or any political party. MARP is incorporated as a Michigan non-profit organization and is exempt from federal income tax under the IRS code 501(c )(3) as a charitable educational organization. Donations to MARP may be tax-deductible in accordance with IRS rules.

## MICHIGAN SERVICES

### Amtrak Train Schedules
**Effective May, 2022**
**Chicago-Kalamazoo-Ann Arbor-Detroit-Pontiac**
**Chicago-Kalamazoo-East Lansing-Port Huron**

| Wolverine Service | Wolverine Service | Blue Water | Wolverine Service | Train Name | | | Wolverine Service | Blue Water | Wolverine Service | Wolverine Service |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 350 | 352 | 364 | 354 | Train Number | | | 351 | 365 | 353 | 355 |
| Daily | Daily | Daily | Daily | Days of Operation | | | Daily | Daily | Daily | Daily |
| 6:45a | 2:15p | 4:00p | 5:50p | Dp | CHICAGO, IL, Un Sta (CT) | Ar | 10:49a | 12:00p | 2:19p | 10:57p |
| 7:11a | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | | Hammond-Whiting, IN (CT) | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | 1:17p | 9:56p |
| 9:04a | 4:31p | 6:10p | 8:04p | | New Buffalo, MI (ET) | | | 11:24a | 1:23p | 10:04p |
| 9:29a | 4:52p | 6:32p | 8:24p | | Niles, MI | | | 11:04a | 1:03p | 9:44p |
| 9:40a | ↓ | 6:43p | ↓ | | Dowagiac, MI | | | 10:52a | ↑ | 9:31p |
| 10:14a | 5:26p | 7:11p | 8:58p | | Kalamazoo, MI | | 9:18a | 10:26a | 12:30p | 9:02p |
| 10:56a | 6:03p | 7:38p | 9:35p | | Battle Creek, MI | | 8:50a | 10:00a | 12:03p | 8:35p |
| | | 9:00p | | | East Lansing, MI | | ↑ | 8:54a | ↑ | ↑ |
| | | 9:37p | | | Durand, MI | | | 8:08a | | |
| | | 10:08p | | | Flint, MI | | | 7:35a | | |
| | | 10:34p | | ↓ | Lapeer, MI | | | 7:08a | | |
| | | 11:31p | ↓ | Ar | PORT HURON, MI | Dp | | 6:20a | | |
| ↓ | ↓ | | 10:04p | | Albion, MI | ↑ | 8:15a | | | |
| 11:53a | 6:57p | | 10:30p | | Jackson, MI | | 7:51a | | 10:58a | 7:37p |
| 12:30p | 7:37p | | 11:10p | | Ann Arbor, MI | | 7:14a | | 10:23a | 7:00p |
| 1:14p | 8:28p | | 11:54p | | Dearborn, MI | | 6:44a | | 9:53a | 6:29p |
| 1:42p | 8:57p | | 12:27a | | DETROIT, MI | | 6:26a | | 9:35a | 6:11p |
| 2:06p | 9:21p | | 12:51a | | Royal Oak, MI | | 6:03a | | 9:12a | 5:48p |
| 2:14p | 9:29p | | 12:59a | ↓ | Troy, MI | | 5:56a | | 9:04a | 5:41p |
| 2:28p | 9:46p | | 1:18a | Ar | PONTIAC, MI (ET) | Dp | 5:43a | | 8:50a | 5:28p |

### Amtrak Train Schedule
**Effective March 7,2022**
**Chicago-Grand Rapids**

| Pere Marquette | Train Name | | | Pere Marquette |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 370 | Train Number | | | 371 |
| Daily | Days of Operation | | | Daily |
| 6:30p | Dp | CHICAGO, IL, Un Sta (CT) | Ar | 9:08a |
| 9:14p | ↓ | St. Joe-Benton Harbor, MI (ET) | ↑ | 8:10a |
| 9:50p | ↓ | Bangor, MI | ↑ | 7:32a |
| 10:33p | ↓ | Holland, MI | ↑ | 6:49a |
| 11:34p | Ar | GRAND RAPIDS, MI (ET) | Dp | 6:00a |

**NOTE: These schedules are provided for planning purposes only and may not show recent time changes. Consult with Amtrak at AMTRAK.COM or 1-800-USA-RAIL when making reservations.**

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**Chuck Merckel, Coordinator (734) 330-0281**

| Station | Staff | MARP Volunteer |
|---|---|---|
| Albion | Bus | Matthew Murawski |
| Ann Arbor | Amtrak | Clark Charnetski/Steve Sobel |
| Bangor | None | J. P. Descamp |
| Battle Creek | Amtrak | Shuler Harmon |
| Dearborn | Amtrak | Mary Jo Durivage |
| Detroit | Amtrak | Dwight Phillips |
| Dowagiac | None | Dowagiac Chbr of Commerce |
| Durand | Museum | Mary Stone |
| East Lansing | Caretkr | Steve Vagnozzi |
| Flint | Bus | Barb Westcott |
| Grand Rapids | Caretkr | Mit Renroc |
| Holland | None | Nathan Nietering |
| Jackson | Caretkr | John Guidinger |
| Kalamazoo | Caretkr | Warren Fritz |
| Lapeer | None | Jim Slater |
| New Buffalo | None | Lori S. Peterson |
| Niles | Caretkr | Jack Kessler |
| Pontiac | Bus | Robert Tischbein |
| Port Huron | None | T. J. Gaffney |
| Royal Oak | None | David Roberts |
| St Joseph | None | Todd Schultz |
| Toledo, OH | Amtrak | Patrick Miller |
| Traverse City | None | Carolyn Ulstad |
| Troy | None | Brad Socier |

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|---|---|
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| ☐ Seniors (65+) | $20 |
| ☐ Individual | $30 |
| ☐ Family | $40 |
| ☐ Advocate | $50 |
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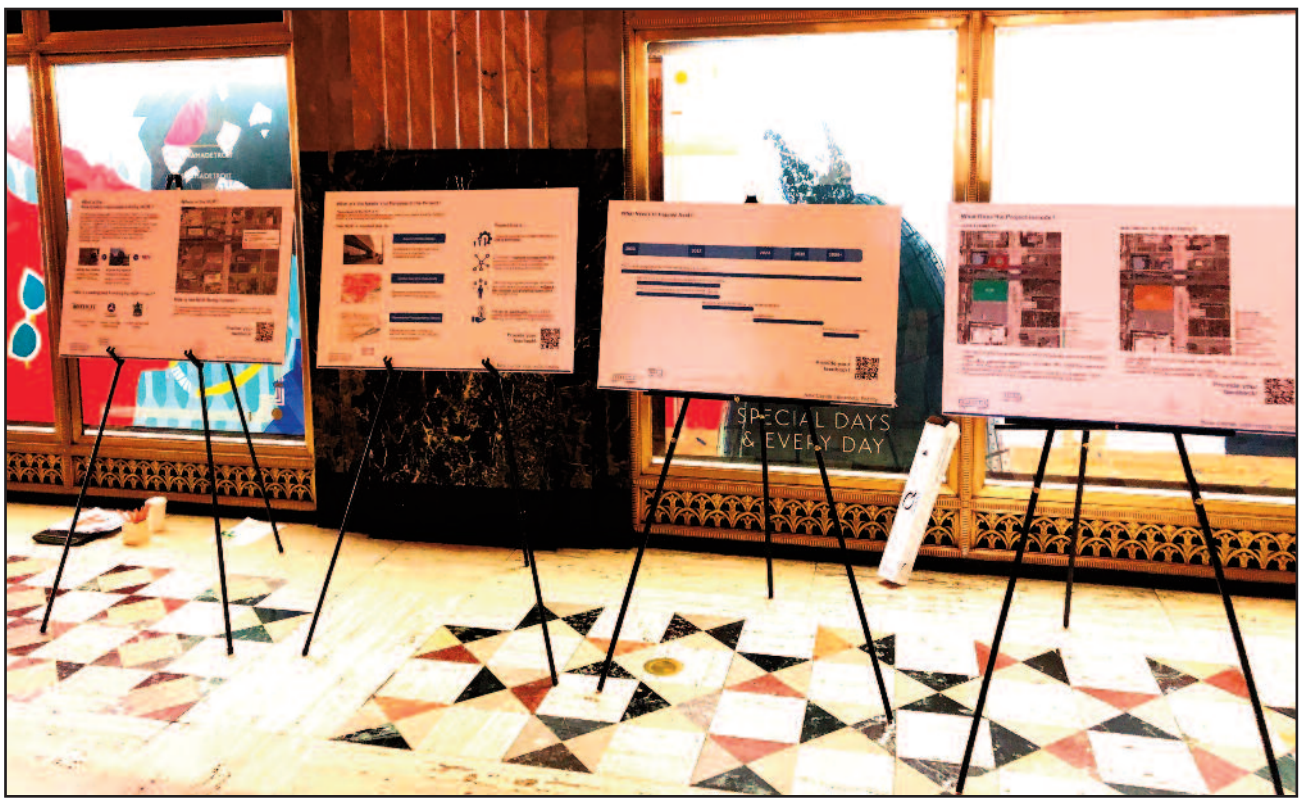
# Detroit New Center Intermodal Facility (NCIF) Public Meeting Held

**By Dwight Phillips**

On July 28th, MARP member Dwight Phillips, attended a meet and greet session held by MDOT at the Fisher Building in Detroit. Easels had been set up to show graphics and renderings of the proposed facilities and site plan. The displayed materials were based on the public presentation made on June 30th.

MDOT will be seeking bidders for a Design-Build-Operate-Maintain contractor for the proposed NCIF project. Phillips discussed various aspects of the project with Jim Schulze, MDOT's Metro Region Planning Manager. Although design work will not commence until the contractor is in place, Schultze indicated that the present conceptual plan includes the following ideas:

- The existing station on the north side of the tracks will be totally demolished.
- The new rail station will have two floors and will be located on the north side of the tracks.
- Although the project site plan includes the large closed parking garage immediately west of the station north of the tracks, MDOT does not presently own it.
- It is possible that the station building could be built on the site of this garage.
- The plan presently calls for both train and bus passengers to utilize a common waiting area. However, this may be changed to have separate waiting areas for the rail and bus passengers. The bus waiting and boarding/disembarking area would be south of the tracks and the rail waiting and boarding/disembarking area would be north of the tracks.
- The new rail station will be accessed by passengers via Baltimore Ave, the same as at present.
- Buses will enter the bus staging area south of the tracks, via either Amsterdam Avenue or Cass Avenue.
- The bus staging area will only occupy approximately one-half of the MDOT-owned property on the south side of the tracks.




**Plans for the NCIF displayed at the public meeting in Detroit's Fisher Building on July 28th. (Dwight Phillips photo)**

- MDOT is conducting a nationwide search for a potential developer for the other half of the south property.
- Parking for rail and bus passengers will be located on the second floor of the bus staging area south of the tracks.
- If the closed parking garage is acquired, but not used for the new station, then MDOT would like to obtain a developer for that property as well.

Phillips told Schulze about his positive experiences with Amtrak's Toledo Intermodal facility. Jim said that he has never been there, but that he might now make a visit. He invited Phillips to contact him if he should have any questions.

During the time of Phillips' morning attendance, there were no other attendees.

# Ukrainian Railways Continue to Operate in Wartime

From the moment on February 24, when Ukraine was invaded by the massive Russian army, the Ukrainian Railways started to operate as a military support unit according to several commentors. The system evacuated almost 4 million people from the eastern and southern regions of the country to safety in the western regions and to neighboring countries such as Poland, Hungary, and Romania. Rail lines to Russia were destroyed immediately.

On August 17th National Public Radio (NPR) reporter Eleanor Beardsley rode on Ukrainian National Railway trains and talked to railway employees. As the full extent of the invasion became known, railway managers at the large Dnipro station in central Ukraine met hourly to plan passenger operations. Trains were moving 15,000 people a day to the west out of Dnipro and every time a train departed the Ukrainian national anthem was played throughout the station. The work was so intense that many railway workers began living at their stations, and reportedly many still do today.

Human resources director at Dnipro, Irina Lytynova, said that when the Russian troops were advancing they had urgent daily meetings to follow the situation on the front lines so they could adapt the schedules to rescue as many people as possible and defend the rail infrastructure. Railroad worker Valeriy Garbatyur said that he had been a railway worker for 40 years and his job has never been so important. "We are saving people. One week we take displaced people and then the next week we are transferring wounded people."

The Russians have targeted railroad tracks, the railroad electric grid, and stations. At least 161 railway employees have been killed so far, and others have died fighting on the front. Photos on the internet show twisted and burned-out coaches and damaged station buildings. NPR reports that track repairs that normally would take weeks before the war, are now completed in hours to keep the lines open.

The railroad company leadership believes it is a prime target for Russian attack. A small management operations team has been assembled and has left Kyiv. They move constantly crisscrossing the country on regular passenger cars to blend in with the masses. The idea is to be near rail operations so as to monitor passengers, employees, and equipment, and stay one step ahead of the Russians – even in the most dangerous parts of Ukraine. The work of managing the vast Ukrainian rail network, one of the largest in the world, with 231,000 employees, 1,450 stations, and 23,000 km of track (much of it electrified) comes down to brief messages on an old fashioned closed-circuit telephone system. Cell phones are seldom used since they may be tracked by the Russians.

Management meetings are kept short, only a few minutes. "The strategy is to move fast so that they don't catch you, and don't spend a long time at one location," Oleksandr Kamyshin, the 37-year-old CEO of Ukrainian Railways, told CNN early in the war. CNN said that he sported an undercut ponytail at meetings and commanded the attention of the room, like a general in war. He was newly promoted to CEO just six months before the war broke out, according to a *New York Times* report of August 29.

**Ukrainian electric passenger train. (Photo from Wikipedia)**
**Enter your email to sign up for CNN's "Meanwhile in China" Newsletter.**

Some cars have been refitted to carry medical supplies to the front lines and the wounded to hospitals. Ordinary rail employees, most with no prior military experience, now sometimes find themselves repairing tracks amidst Russian shelling. The trains move at slow speeds of about 65 km per hour in most places – down from 160 km per hour because they're overloaded with people and the engineer needs to be able to stop in time if damaged track is seen ahead of the train. *The New York Times* reports that damage to the power poles and conductors supplying power to the trains can usually be repaired in under 30 minutes. Destroyed bridges take longer to repair, but the rail system is redundant enough to allow trains to be rerouted with minimal disruptions until the bridges can be repaired.

As time has passed, many of the trains away from the front lines are again running on time and safely. Millions are returning to Ukraine on the rails. A conductor on the Kyiv-Warsaw Express, Stanislav Shynkaruk, 49, said that he has witnessed countless scenes of suffering and is proud of his role in the war. People stop him in the streets and thank him for his service.

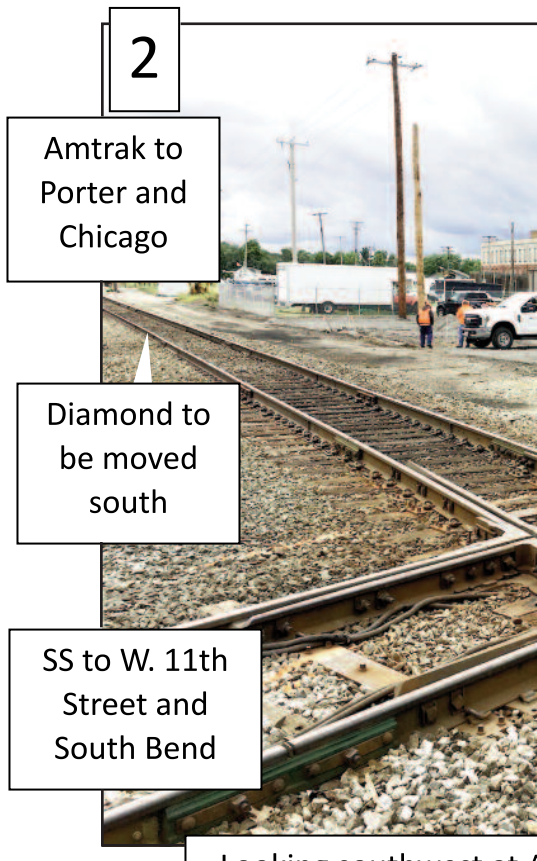
NPR's Eleanor Beardsley talked to 18-year-old college student Lisa Plesshanova who said that it is pretty cool that we have something more than just a train. He said that the rail system embodies the spirit of the country as it comes together in this war.

# Double-Tracking the South Shore I

MARP members Chuck Merckel and John Guidinger visited Michigan City, Indiana, on September 28, 2022, to look at the double-tracking work underway on the South Shore Railroad. The work in Michigan City is part of a major project to double-track 26.6 miles of the 90-mile railroad. On the west edge of Michigan City, an existing double-track segment of the railroad becomes single track at Sheridan Steet, which forms a well-defined western edge of the residential neighborhood. For 3,600 feet between Sheridan Street and the diamond where the South Shore crosses the Amtrak line on Huron Street, the new double track and overhead catenary will be moved out of West 10th Street onto the adjacent residential lots along the south side of the street. Inspection of aerial photos shows that approximately 37 residents and two industrial buildings have been removed from the south side of the street for the new the railroad right-of-way.

At the Amtrak diamond, the South Shore jogs on a sharp double curve typical of old-time interurban lines to reach West 11th Street. For the next 1.2 miles, West 11th Street will be removed and the double track railroad and catenary will largely replace the street. Several additional residences and other buildings have been removed from this street. A narrow one-way lane will be constructed on the south side of the tracks to allow residents to access their homes. Between Franklin and Cedar Streets, a platform about 700 feet long is being built for the new 11th Street Station. Just west of Michigan Boulevard, the railroad will return to a single-track configuration for the remaining 33 miles to South Bend. The sharp curve east of the diamond and several less prominent curves will be broadened to allow for faster running. (See the photos and map.)

Looking east along W. 10th Street from Hayes Street toward Amtrak/SS crossing.




Looking southwest at A
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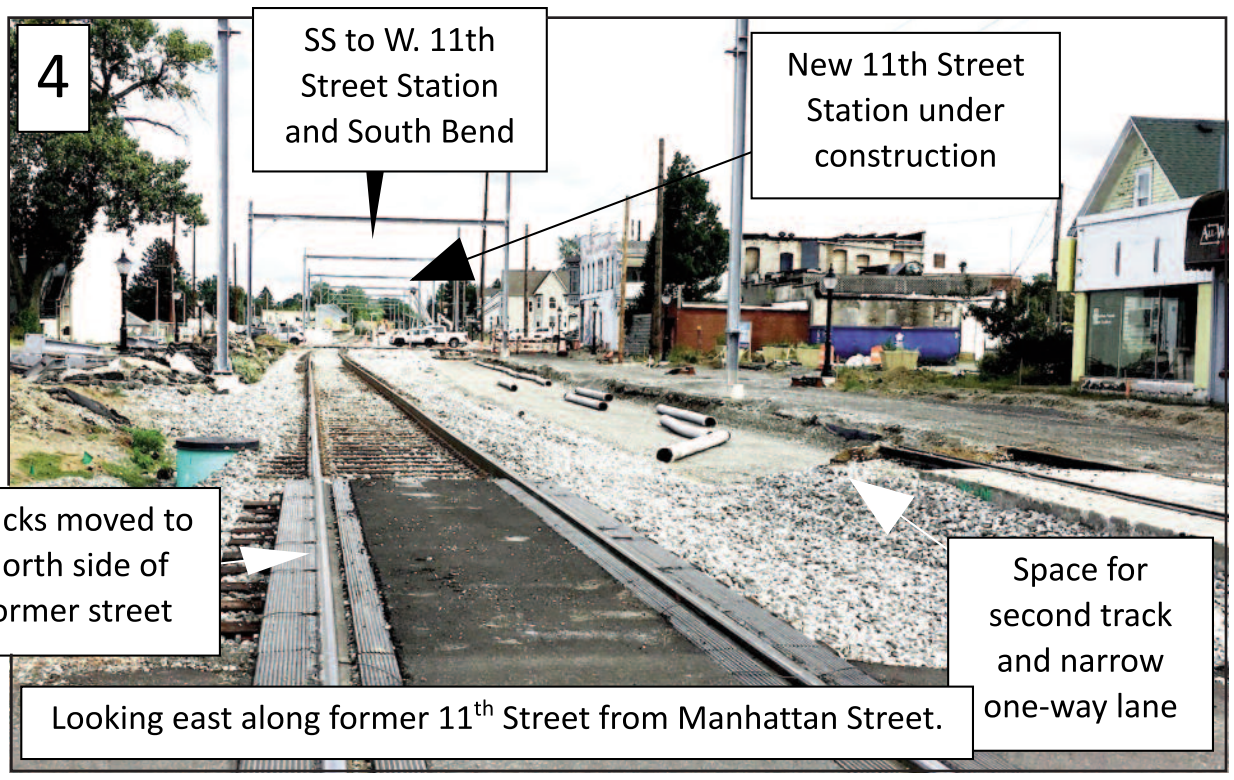
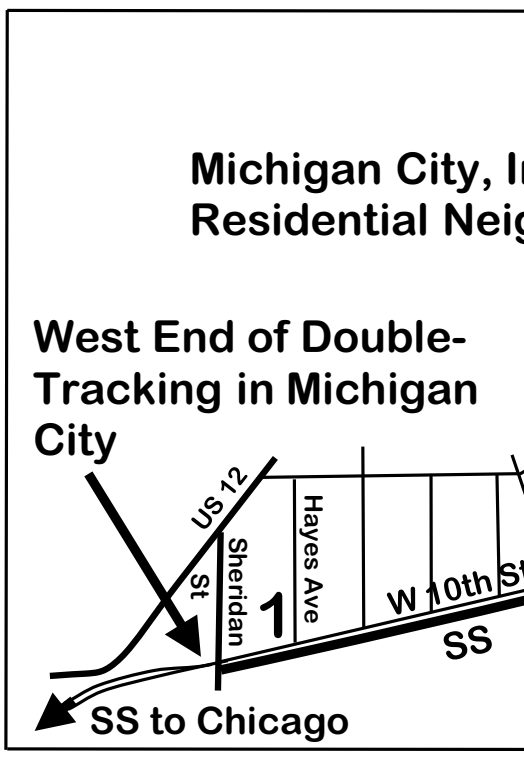

4
SS to W. 11th Street Station and South Bend
New 11th Street Station under construction
Tracks moved to north side of former street
Space for second track and narrow one-way lane

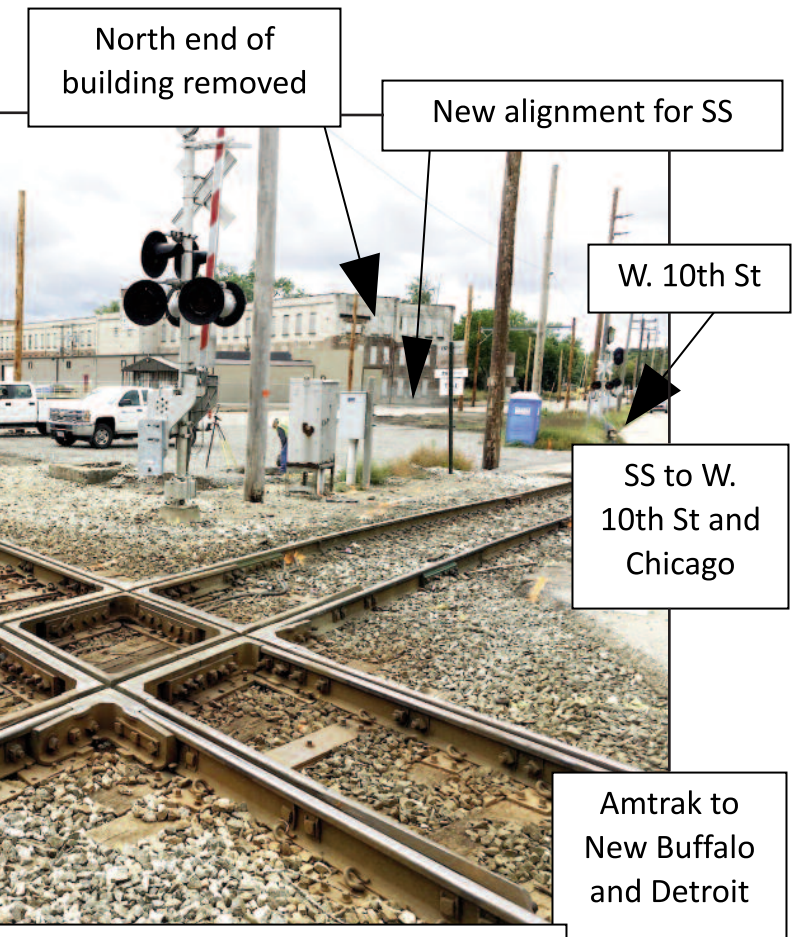
Looking east along former 11th Street from Manhattan Street.



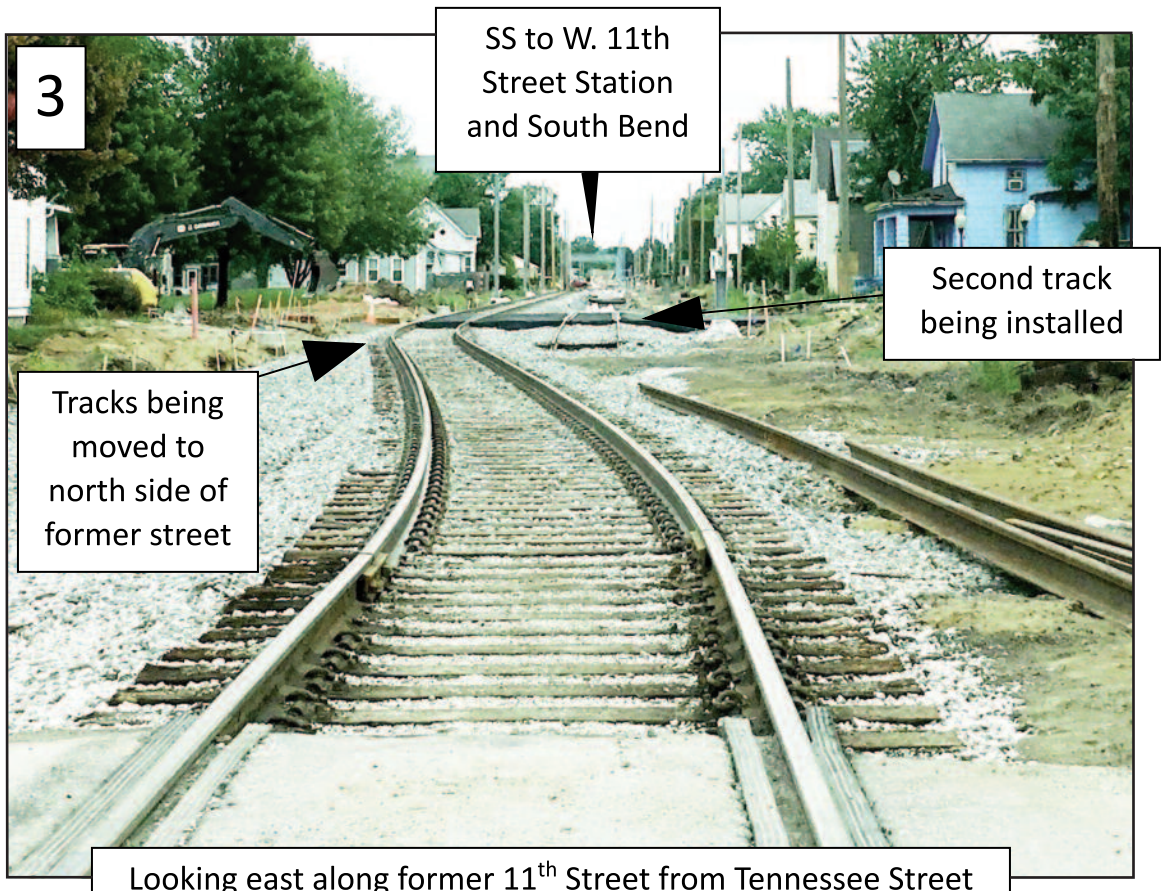
New 11th Street Station under construction. Looking east along former 11th Street from Pine Street.

Looking east along former

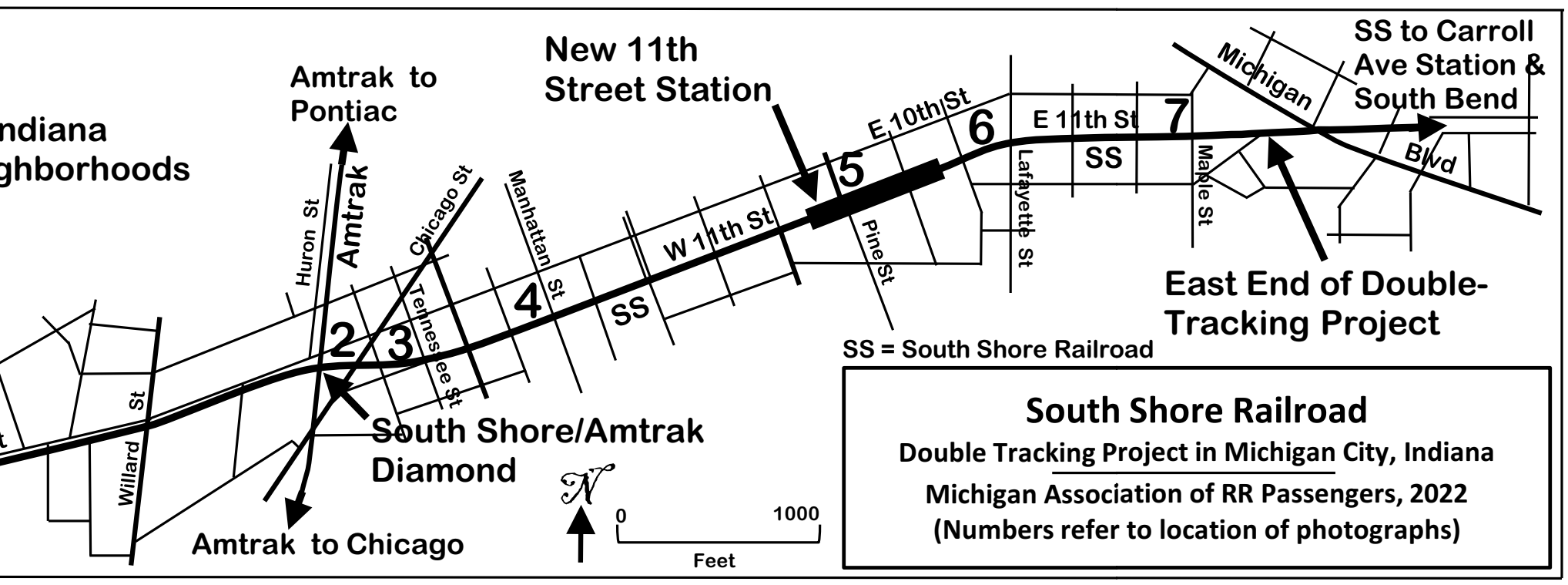
# Railroad in Michigan City, Indiana




Amtrak/South Shore crossing diamond n Michigan City.

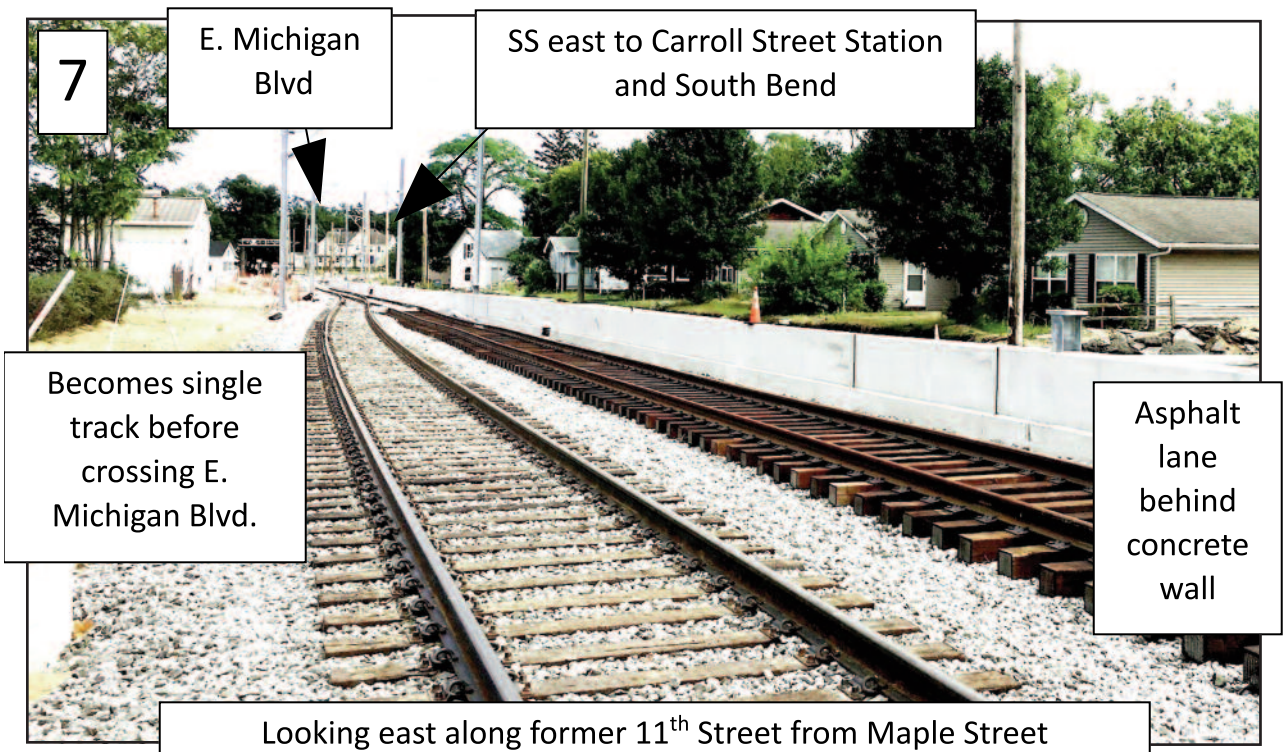

3
SS to W. 11th Street Station and South Bend
Second track being installed
Tracks being moved to north side of former street

Looking east along former 11th Street from Tennessee Street

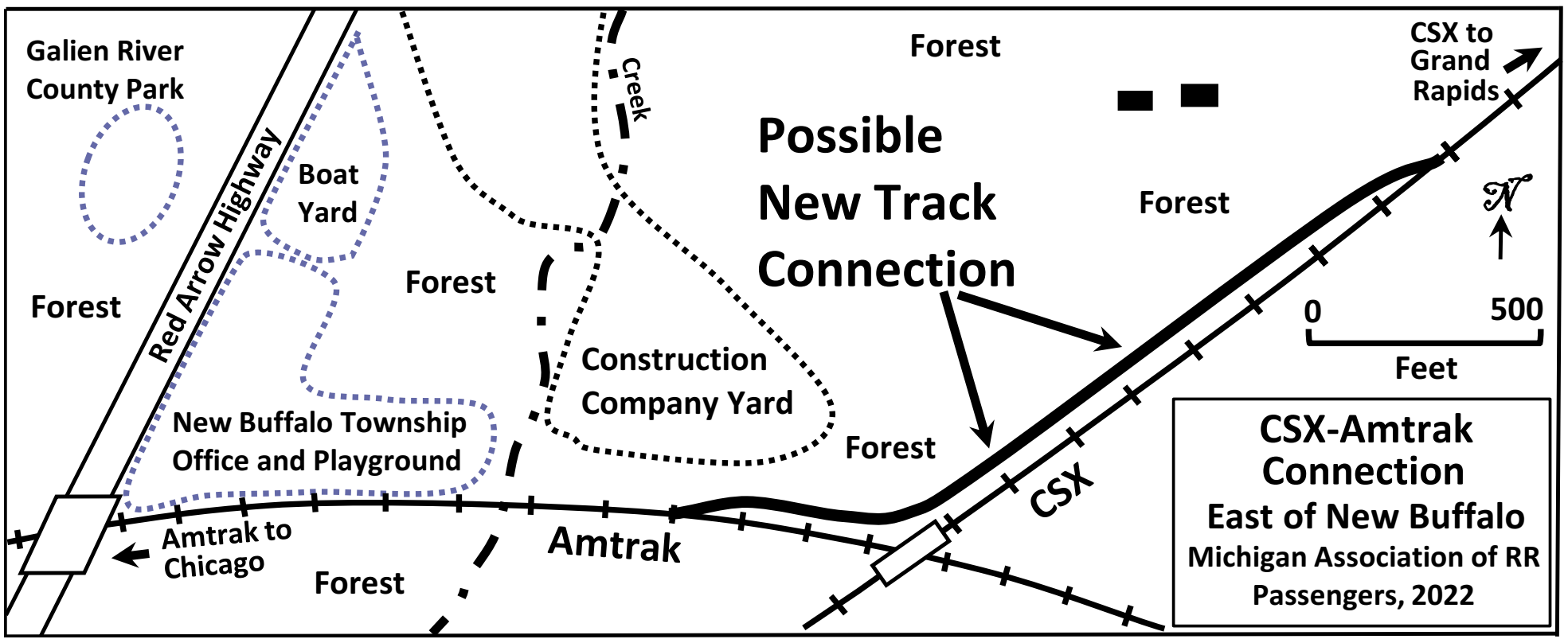


Asphalt lane on south side for one-way traffic to the east.

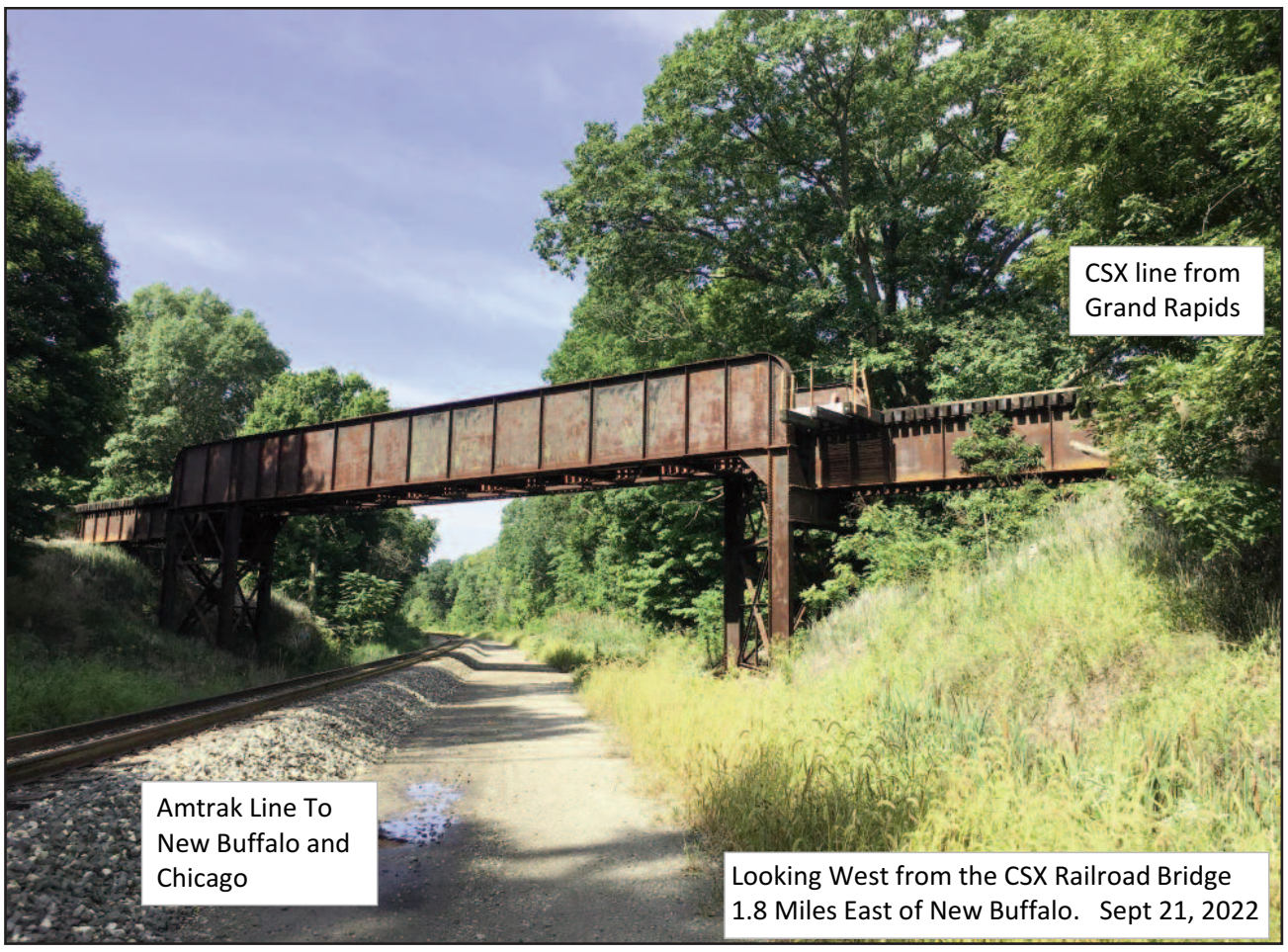
r 11th Street from Lafayette Street


7
E. Michigan Blvd
SS east to Carroll Street Station and South Bend
Becomes single track before crossing E. Michigan Blvd.
Asphalt lane behind concrete wall

Looking east along former 11th Street from Maple Street




**The map (above) and the photo (right) show the location of a possible connection between CSX and Amtrak to allow Amtrak's Pere Marquette to join the other Amtrak trains on the route to Chicago. The connection would be at the CSX bridge 1.8 miles east of the New Buffalo station where the line from Grand Rapids crosses over the Amtrak line. Assuming an elevation difference of 25 feet between the new switches, a connecting lead 1,800 feet long would result in a grade of a little over 1 percent. Shifting the Pere Marquette to the Amtrak Line would allow the train to stop at the rapidly growing community of New Buffalo. It would also permit the train to possibly shift someday with the other Amtrak trains off the congested Norfolk Southern line at Michigan City, Indiana, to the passenger friendly South Shore to reach Chicago.**




Looking West from the CSX Railroad Bridge 1.8 Miles East of New Buffalo. Sept 21, 2022

# Reconstructed Merchants Bridge at St. Louis Now Open

**By Hugh Gurney**

With great fanfare, the St. Louis, Missouri, region marked the full reopening of the Merchants Bridge on September 15, 2022, after a four-year reconstruction of the 133-year-old rail structure. The bridge crosses the Mississippi River with three spans and elevated approaches that total 4,340 feet in length. Connecting Illinois with downtown St. Louis, it is used by six Class I freight railroads and Amtrak's Lincoln Service trains and the Texas Eagle. Merchants Bridge is a key link in one of the nation's primary east-west rail corridors and serves one of the country's largest freight rail hubs.

Elected officials, transportation and business leaders from both Missouri and Illinois gathered to honor the owner of the span, Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis, as well as contractor Walsh Construction, Bi-State Development/St. Louis Regional Freightway, and Bank of America for their parts in a major achievement for the region and the nation. The rebuilt span can now handle twice as much weight. The ability to use both eastbound and westbound tracks at the same time will avoid delays and allow St. Louis to be a stronger freight competitor to Chicago, known for its chronic freight congestion.

Full completion followed quickly after the successful placement of the third and last steel span, reported by *Railway Age* on August 30. The total project required removing and replacing all three spans, seismically upgrading piers, and improving the long elevated approach structure on the Illinois side of the river. Without action, rail traffic could have been redirected away from the St. Louis area. Total cost of the project was $222 million. A Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) grant of $21.45 million helped, but 90% of the cost was picked up by owner Terminal Railroad Association. Construction financing was arranged through Bank of America St. Louis. A small amount of additional money was provided by Union Pacific, Amtrak, BNSF, Kansas City Southern, and the State of Illinois.

On the Illinois side of the Mississippi, the Illinois Department of Transportation (ILDOT) completed a related project designed to untangle the approaches to the bridge, according to *thetelegraph.com* on October 6, 2022. The Lennox Signal Tower at Mitchell with its antiquated equipment was deactivated and torn down and its operations transferred to the Union Pacific dispatching center in Omaha. A complex maze of tracks, signals and switches where four lines intersected was also untangled, permitting trains to move through the area much more quickly.

"Amtrak happily made a $1million investment in this project because of the immediate benefit it provides to our customers on the 10 Lincoln Service and Texas Eagle trains that use this track daily", said Ray Lang, Amtrak vice president for state-supported services. "ILDOT, UP, and Amtrak all want to eliminate delays and reduce travel times on the popular Chicago-St. Louis corridor, and this work is part of that continuous initiative."

# MDOT Writes a Letter

MDOT has sent a letter, dated October 3rd, to the Federal Railroad Administration expressing interest in participating in the FRA's corridor Identification and Development Program. This is part of the major Infrastructure program established by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act established by congress in 2021. MARP is very pleased to see MDOT initiate action to take advantage of this important funding mechanism to enhance passenger rail service in the State of Michigan.

Signed by Peter Anastor, Director of the MDOT Office of Rail, the letter references the long experience of MDOT with Amtrak and the FRA and the many miles of rail uniquely devoted in Michigan to intercity passenger rail operations. The letter summarizes MDOT's efforts to develop Service Development Plans (SDPs) needed to prioritize corridors for the Corridor ID Program. The letter specifically identifies increasing service frequencies, improving reliability, and reducing travel times:

- Between Detroit/Pontiac and Chicago, with a possible extension to Windsor/Toronto and to Toledo/Cleveland
- Between Port Huron and Chicago
- Between Grand Rapids and Chicago
- Between Chicago and Porter, Indiana

MDOT looks forward to receiving a response from the FRA concerning:

- Prioritizing the corridors and obtaining information required for applications in advance of completing the SDPs
- The ability to submit partial corridors such as Chicago-Porter
- Strategies to advance multiple corridors through the Corridor ID Program
- A strategy for ensuring the readiness of new and expanded ideas for inclusion in the program in accordance with Michigan regulations

Although details are sketchy, the letter represents an initial formal contact with the FRA to take advantage of the newly available federal funding. MARP hopes that this is the start of expanded service on our existing Amtrak routes and the development of exciting new routes to Toronto, Cleveland, and the east coast.

# Subway Humanistics

**Paul Krugman, a native New Yorker, New York Times Columnist, and Nobel Prize winner in Economics, points out that riding on the vast New York Subway remains far safer than other forms of transportation. In his column of October 25, 2022, Krugman says that one reason why New York City is safer than suburban and small-town communities is that far fewer people die in traffic accidents. Subway riders are shielded from traffic accidents for a long portion of their trips. Crime in New York City can seem high, but attacks in the subway so far in 2022 have totaled only nine, on a system that carries 3 to 4 million passengers each workday. The subway also causes people to interact with others through casual contact with people of different economic classes and ethnicities. Hostility to groups that don't look or sound like you tends to be lower when you regularly encounter people in these groups. The subway demands consideration for other people, such as making space for others on crowded cars and in the way passengers file off a crowded subway car at every stop to let other people off, and then get back on. Riding on the subway is to see large numbers of people behaving well, and only a few behaving badly. Krugman says that he generally emerges from his commutes thinking a bit better of humanity. The subway system plays a positive role in the life of a great city no other place in America can match. (NY MTA Photo)**

# SHORT LINES

**Rail Baltica is a new standard gauge railroad being designed with European Union support** to link Helsinki, Finland, with Warsaw, Poland. Rail Baltica will electrify its entire 870 km (540 mile) system, which will be the largest single-project, electrification development in Europe. The passenger and freight line will connect the democratic counties in the region to Europe (instead of Russia), and help unify a conglomeration of 19th century, Russian built lines having nonuniform gauges. Once built and operating, the measurable socio-economic benefits are estimated to be €16.2 trillion annually…….**Passenger rail funding for big projects is moving into high gear throughout the US. In Florida**, Brightline received a $15 million grant from the USDOT matching Brightline's own contribution for designing a new railroad to eventually connect the existing Miami-West Palm Beach service with Orlando and Tampa, thus serving 70 percent of the Florida population. **In New York,** replacement of the large Livingston Avenue Bridge spanning the Hudson River between Albany and Rensselaer, parts of which date to 1866, is the subject of a grant request to cover a portion of the cost, currently estimated to be $400 million. The bridge carries all the Empire Corridor trains and the Lake Shore Limited, plus many CSX freight trains. **In California**, the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission received $57million from the California Transit and Intercity Capital Program to help extend the 86-mile Stockton-San Jose Altamont Corridor Express commuter line on a proposed new branch from the North Lathrop to Modesto, Ceres, and Turlock, about 50 miles. The plan is to reach another 20 miles to Merced for a connection to the interim, north terminus of the future California High Speed Rail line……**Fully automatic (driverless) operations began on the Paris Metro's Line Four** on September 12, according to *The International Railway Journal*. The 13.9 km line is a rubber-tired subway line that serves 29 stations and is the second busiest line in the extensive Paris subway system, which include both rubber-tired and steel wheel equipment. Work on converting the line to automatic control began in 2016 and was completed at a cost of €470. Line 1 of the system has been driverless since 1998…..**Chicago's METRA North commuter line will receive new ties** between Chicago and Kenosha, a distance of 45 miles. *Railway Age* reports that the work will be performed by Union Pacific track crews starting on September 20 with completion set for the end of November. The work will be performed between 7PM and 5AM seven days a week to minimize interference with commuter schedules…... **Monthly Ridership on Virginia state supported trains reached an all-time high** of 110,256 passengers in July of 2022, a 19.8 percent increase over pre-pandemic level in July of 2019. In June the state added a new train to Roanoke and a new train to Newport News, and restored a round trip to Newport News that had been suspended due to the pandemic. In other news, Virginia came to an agreement with Norfolk Southern on infrastructure improvements to extend passenger service from Roanoke west about 30 miles to Christiansburg in the New River Valley and close to the Virginia Tech University at Blacksburg. The state will own the railroad with NS continuing to provide freight service. An estimated 80,000 new riders will use the extended service in the first year.….**Congressman James J. Florio died on September 25th at the age of 85,** according to *Railway Age*. A former New Jersey governor and 8-term congressman, Jim Florio was one of the greats in modern railroad history. He was the principal author of the revolutionary 1980 Staggers Rail Act that deregulated the rail industry during the tumultuous years following the Penn Central collapse. At the last minute when the Act seemed to be destined for failure, Florio, a Republican, in a flash of political savvy, came up with the idea to name his act after the immensely popular West Virginia Democratic Congressman Harley O. Stagers, a move that brought bipartisan goodwill and immediate success.….**Threats from Russia has led the German Government to prioritize the rail transport of coal and oil** in emergency situations where a refinery or power plant is threatened with closing. Unprecedented in peacetime, the measure is also the result of low water levels in rivers that have affected barging operations. German policy on abandoning nuclear power plants has been paused……..**NJ.com reports a $2 billion increase in the cost of the massive Gateway Project and Penn Station improvements.** The total estimated cost set at $14 billion in 2021 is now $16 billion. Inflation and supply chain issues are blamed as the cause. New Jersey, New York, and USDOT remain committed to the project. Construction is now planned to start in 2024 and be completed in 2038…….**Amtrak's busy Los Angeles-San Diego corridor was shut down to through rail traffic** in late September due to unstable soils in the San Clemente area. *Railway Age* reports that the tracks, which had slid as much as 28 inches over the last 13 months, may be able to reopen for through trains in mid-December. Emergency slope stabilization work will include the placement of angled concrete and steel reinforcement plates attached to steel anchors drilled 100 feet horizontally into bedrock. BNSF, which operates freight trains over the route is limiting trains to one train a day at slow speeds in the unstable area. This line provides the only freight rail access to San Diego…... **All Aboard for Grand Central was the title of a Long Island Railroad** press release on October 21 announcing that final testing was underway prior to the opening of LIRR service to New York's Grand Central Terminal in a few weeks. This is the biggest expansion of the LIRR since service to Penn Station began on September 8, 1910. LIRR is set to add 269 trains each weekday, for a total of 936 trains per day. About half of LIRR riders transfer from Penn Station to Grand Central and this expansion will save each rider 20 precious minutes of commute time. The MTA released a video describing the history and construction process, all of which is deep underground. View the video by searching under "LIRR to Grand Central Terminal"……..**The multi-year Chicago CREATE program of improvements launched their largest project** on October 25. On Chicago's south side, a new rail flyover will be built at the CSX Forest Hill Yard and an overhead grade separation will be installed on 71st Street. Estimated to cost $380 million, these projects will unwind METRA Commuter and freight train entanglements and remove delays and safety issues to pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers on 71st Street. According to *Railway Age*, of the 70 CREATE projects identified, 33 projects have been completed, 4 projects are under construction, and 15 are in various states of design…..**In Michigan, Amtrak discontinued corridor Trains 350 and 355 in July citing a lack of workers** to crew the train. Reportedly, these two trains will return about October 25 and one round trip between Kansas City and St. Louis will be cut temporarily due to Amtrak's nationwide staff shortage.

# MARP Expresses Outrage

## Train 351 Thirteen Hours Late and Train 353 Ten Hours Late at Chicago

An Absolute Disaster

On October 7th, Amtrak Train 351 arrived in Chicago 13 hours late after a series of disastrous events initiated by a locomotive failure west of Chelsea. Train 353, which had been coupled to 351 to provide power, arrived in Chicago about 10 hours late. Based on many sources of information reaching MARP, the journey was a horribly frustrating series of starting and stopping for long periods, leading many angry passengers to abandon the train enroute and call family and friends to come rescue them.

MARP believes that the problem was greatly exacerbated by poor management decisions by Amtrak, probably the biggest failure being the refusal to have remedies in place to allow a rescue locomotive to arrive and assist Train 351 without interfering with Train 353.

The problem started when the Siemens locomotive on Train 351 stopped at mile post 58 west of Chelsea and could not be restarted by the crew. Amtrak decided that Train 353, scheduled to follow 351 three hours later, would be combined with 351 and used to power 351 to Chicago. After sitting on the mainline track for about 3 hours, train 353 arrived. Difficulties combining the two trains train caused them to arrive many hours late at Jackson, where several people abandoned it.

The combined train continued west becoming later and later due to additional problems. Finally electrical power went off in the Train 351 cars after the batteries were depleted. Toilets became inoperable, heat and light were lost, and the café car ran out of food. After sunset the cars of 351 were dark, the toilets over flowing, the odor was unbearable, the cars were cold, and no food or water was available. The crew reached their 12-hour limit at East Chicago, about 20 miles from Chicago, where the train was parked waiting for a replacement crew. At this point, dozens of angry passengers opened the car doors on their own and fled. Despite the danger, they crossed the busy Norfolk Southern tracks in the dark. They were photographed wading through wait-high vegetation with their bags to arrive at the edge of Expressway 912, where they were photographed again standing in the dark calling on their cell phones for help. Eventually the replacement crew arrived and the combined train finally reached Chicago about midnight.

This was one of the most egregious failures by Amtrak to attend to the needs of passengers in the history of Amtrak in Michigan. MARP has called for a full investigation of this disaster. We prepared a statement of outrage and sent it to state and federal political leaders and to MDOT. We think this was a disaster that could have been avoided if proper procedures had been in place. These would include properly maintaining the locomotive, calling for a freight locomotive to rescue the train (Norfolk Southern locomotives are usually at Jackson at mile post 75), having a spare locomotive stationed along the route (the line is primarily an Amtrak passenger railroad), calling for buses at Jackson to take the passengers on to Chicago, and putting food on the train for the passengers. We see no reason why this disaster could not occur again at any time.

MARP believes that the Amtrak system has been so skeletonized in the inane chase of imaginary profits that the system no longer functions as a service provider. Amtrak cannot react correctly to bring emergencies under control quickly to minimize the effect on the passengers. We think it is time to replace top level Amtrak managers with people with railroad passenger operating experience. Costs must be contained of course, but the first priority must be not on profits, but on providing safe, reliable, useable, and modern passenger services for Michigan and the United States.

# MARP Holds 49th Annual Meeting

On Saturday, October 22, members of MARP and many guests met in the Lost Railway Museum in Grass Lake, Michigan, for the 2022 Annual Meeting. Tim Hoeffner, the recently retired head of the MDOT Office of Rail, addressed the group with a talk on "Effective Passenger Rail Advocacy in Michigan." Many questions were asked of Tim and an active discussion ensued about MARP's role in pressing for rail improvements. The October 7th disaster to Trains 351 and 353 was also a major topic.

Following the speaker, the Business Meeting addressed many agenda items. Included was the biennial election of a new Executive Committee (listed on Page 2). Chair John Guidinger (Jackson) and Treasurer Jean Merckel (Livonia) will continue for another 2-year term, along with Executive Committee members Clark Charnitski (Ann Arbor), Chuck Merckel (Livonia), Todd Shultz (St. Joseph), and Robert Patterson (Detroit). Carolyn Ulstad (Traverse City) will become the Vice Chair.

New members of the Executive Committee are Bob Lovell (East Lansing), Shuler Harmon, (Battle Creek), and Ted Wojcik (Evart). The former Vice Chair, Steve Vagnozzi (Okemos) will continue in an off-Committee role of Government Affairs Coordinator. Former Secretary, Larry Krieg (Ypsilanti), will continue to be an advisor to MARP and continue to study on time performance issues. At present we need to find a new Secretary and, we have hopes that Todd Shultz will accept the call for this role.

**MARP Vice Chair Carolyn Ulstad cuts the cake. An image of a new venture coach is on the cake in the form of frosting.**

**Following the meeting, a hot lunch and engaging conversation was enjoyed by all attendees.**

Amtrak's Derrick James made a special trip to the MARP meeting to explain the events resulting in the disastrous 13-hour and 10-hour delay on October 7th to Trains 351 and 353 respectively. The MARP Chair thanked him for his special effort to reach out to MARP, but the Chair expressed MARP's collective outrage at the delay and the horrible conditions endured by the passengers trapped on the trains. Mr. James understood and admitted that Amtrak made mistakes. He promised to bring MARP's message home to Amtrak Management.

Among other agenda items, two revisions to the MARP bylaws were approved by the membership. First, ambiguity in the bylaws was clarified by defining the Executive Committee as having 12 members, consisting of 4 officers and 8 elected committee members. The other change removed the Regional Chapter Chairs from automatic membership on the Executive Committee (although they are not precluded from being on the Committee). Since the one existing Chapter Chair, Robert Patterson, does not have a chapter organization, he will become an elected member of the committee.

In other meeting actions, the Treasurer reported that MARP was in good financial condition and that membership stood at 208, with many other non-member supporters. The Chair summarized the 2022 activities. This included support for the 24 Station Representatives (passive observers at Michigan Amtrak stations), publication of four issues of the quarterly *Michigan Passenger*, monthly issues of the online *OnTrack*, and maintaining an up-to-date website, MARP.org. Printing and distribution of timetables continued in 2022 with about 10,000 copies printed. The membership brochure was reprinted in 2022. The new MARP Admirative Assistant, Sharon Pederson, was introduced and her role was defined as supporting Steve Vagnozzi in outreach activities, including Governmental Affairs and setting up future meetings with various civic groups to promote improved passenger services.

Finally, a list of general MARP goals was discussed with emphasis for MARP support on Amtrak's Chicago Access Project and new passenger train services to Traverse City and Petosky. A recognition award was given to Michigan Senator Wayne Schmidt for his long support for rail passenger and freight service to northern Michigan. Although Senator Schmidt could not attend the meeting, Carolyn Ulstad will present the award to him as a representative of MARP at his office in Traverse City.

# In California

**Electrification of 51 miles of the Caltrain commuter line between San Francisco and San Jose is well underway with completion set for later this year. Electrification will allow the shift from large Diesel-electric locomotives and heavy gallery cars to light weight, multiple-unit, electric train sets. The first 6-car set of 16 trainsets (left) has arrived and is being tested with an in-service date planned for later this year. The new equipment is being built by Stadler Rail in Salt Lake City at a total cost of $166 million. Limited services using Diesel powered trains will continue south of San Jose to Gilroy, and further Diesel extensions to Dumbarton, Salinas and Monterey are either planned or under discussion. This was formerly a Southern Pacific Railroad operation and was the subject of discontinuance efforts by the railroad in 1977. Since then, the system has slowly been rebuilt to more modern standards. Ownership was transferred to the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board in 1991. Caltrain is a massive operation with 70 trains a day on week days, 32 trains on weekends, serving 31 stations, carrying 11,000 riders on week days. Once electrification is complete and the new trainsets are in service, the line will see 6 trains an hour in each direction during most of the day and operate more as a transit system than a traditional commuter railroad. There is regular freight service on the line resulting in the need for a waiver for the crash worthiness of the light-weight Stadler equipment. The waiver was issued after a considerable amount of concern was addressed, however concerns remain. (Wikipedia, 2022) (Caltrain photo)**